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OMAHA CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ORNAMENTS.

BY J. OWEN DORSEY.

The material for this article was collected by me on the Omaha reservation, in 1878-'80, and revised in the summer of 1882, with the assistance of two Omahas, two Crows, and the late Joseph La Flèche.

Garments were usually made by the women, while the men made their weapons.

MEN'S CLOTHING.

Some of the Omaha and Ponka (whose customs resemble those of the Omaha) have adopted the dress of the white men. The ancient dress consisted of buffalo robes, breech-cloths, leggings, and moccasins. Shirts were not worn. Blankets have been introduced by traders and the Indian Bureau. There is no distinction between the dress of dignitaries and that of the common people. Several kinds of face and head coverings were used. In cold weather they used to wear the *Te in-de ha wa-dha-ge*, a hat made of the black hair which grows on the face of the buffalo near the chin. This hat was worn over the head and face. Another protection for the face and ears was made of the skin of a wild cat. The skin was tanned and whitened.

Min-gha-san nin-du-dhi-se wa-dha-ge was a hat made of the feathers of the brant from the middle of the body to the tail-feathers inclusive. This hat was worn occasionally by those who went on the war-path and not at other times.

Ma-shu-pa-gdhan is a cap made of the tail-feathers of eagles. It extends down the back, nearly to the feet.

Khi-dha wa-dha-ge or *Khi-dha dha-ge* of the Omaha and Ponka (*Khü-yu-lañ-ge* of the Kansa), is a cap made of the entire eagle-skin.

Te-zhin-hin-de wa-dha-ge, a turban made of yarn and beads, is of modern origin, and is worn for ornament, as in the dances.

Ta-hin wa-gdhan, a head-dress used by the Omaha, Ponka, Iowa, and Oto, was made of a deer's tail ornamented with peacock's feathers and the rattles of snakes. This and the "Crow" were re-

wards of bravery and were worn during the *He-dhu-shka* and scalp dances.¹

Ka-ghe mi-gdhan or "Crow." This was made on two parallel sticks and was covered with porcupine work. On one side hung the *ibe* or tail of a crow, while from the other was suspended the tail of a coyote. Both sticks were fastened to a belt and projected out from the back of the wearer.

Masks were used by the young men when they entered lodges to beg. They were made of bladders softened by pulling with the hands, and they had holes for the mouth, eyes, and nostrils.

Belts were formerly made of any kind of skin procurable, as of the buffalo, deer, or antelope. Since the advent of the white man, these Indians have made two other kinds of belts, the *ha i-gdha-ze* and the *te-zhin-hin-de i-pi-dha-ge*. The former is made of strands of *wa-han'* or yarn, which are interwoven. The latter is made of yarn in like manner, but with beads strung on as described by Dougherty in his account of the Omahas.²

"In the manufacture of this common and much admired article of dress, ten double threads are attached by one end to a small *wang* (*wahan'*, J. O. D.) or shreads of leather (*sic*), which is firmly stretched and fixed transversely to the work; each double thread is placed at such a distance from the adjoining ones as to give room for the beads. These are then strung on, one on each double thread. By this operation a transverse row of beads is formed upon the work parallel to the *wang*. This being done, the left double thread is passed to the right, not over and under, but through all the double threads, parallel to and in contact with the beads, and in this position occupies the situation of woof or filling; but its extremity is continued along on the right side of the work, so as to resume, in that portion of its length, the character of warp or chain. Another row of beads is now put on; after which the next left-hand double thread is passed through each of the others to the right of the work, as the previous one had been."

Breech-cloths were made of deer-skin or antelope-skin, but now a piece of an old blanket is generally used for that purpose.

Robes (*wa-in'*) were made during the winter, because the winter skins or *me-ha* had thick hair. The string for fastening the robe around the neck was called the *iñ-ke-gdhe-shtañ-ga*, a name now

¹ See p. 329, "Om. Soc.," in 3d Eth. Rept.

² In Long's Expedition to the Rocky Mts., Vol. I, p. 286-7.

given to buttons. Robes were worn with the hair out by chiefs and others on special occasions. These robes were often decorated on the smooth side with blue, red, and black lines, forming various designs, some of which referred to past events in the life of the wearer.

Mittens were made of buffalo hides that had thick hair, but now some of them are of elk-skin. They were short and rounded a little at the top. They were worn only by the aged men and women.

Foot Coverings.—Under the moccasins and next to the feet were the native *hin-be' ga'-win-ghe*, made of buffalo hair taken from the head, or of red grass which had been pulled in the hands till it became soft. This hair or grass was wrapped round and round (*ga-win'-ghe*) the feet previous to putting on the moccasins. Even when the grass became wet it was still a good covering. Since these Indians have encountered the white men they have in some cases adopted the socks and stockings, which they now call *hin-be ga-win-ghe*.

Moccasins were called *hin-be* or *han-be*. These are distinguished from those of other tribes by the shape of the sole, the number and positions of the *hin-be ga-she-gdhe* or tags on the moccasin heels, and by the *hin-be-di-ha* or flap next the ankle, as well as by the character of the designs of porcupine-work or bead-work on them.

The Ponka used to wear moccasins like those of the Omaha, but recently they have adopted the Dakota styles. An Omaha *hin-be-di-ha* is rounded at the ends next the toes and is about two and a half inches wide, extending nearly down to the sole of the moccasin. A Ponka *hin-be-di-ha* is angular at the ends next the toes and is not over one inch and a half in width. The flaps are turned up and tied around the ankles in bad weather. The Omaha omit the heel tags whenever they desire. Moccasins are generally made in the summer, as the hides of the buffalo slain during that season have little hair on them. When the women make the moccasins they pull off whatever hair there is on the hide, as they also do when they wish to make leggings or skins for tents.

The trail of an Indian has the following peculiarities: First, the sole of the moccasin by its shape marks the tribe of the wearer, except when the style has been borrowed from another tribe; secondly, the heel tags by their number and order furnish another criterion (the Omaha have three, one in the middle and one on each side; elsewhere we find two, equidistant from the middle of the heel;

another tribe has one in the middle and one on the right; still another, one in the middle and one on the left;—some tribes have but one, and so on); thirdly, each tribe has its own style of turning the toes in walking. This is caused by the Indian mother who, when the child is in its cradle, ties its feet straight or otherwise between pieces of wood. Omaha and Ponka walk with the toes pointing straight ahead. The Dakota turn their toes in a little, and the Winnebago are exceedingly pigeon-toed. The Pawnee turn their toes out.

Sometimes over-moccasins were worn. The inner moccasins were thin, being made of elk or deer skin, but the outer ones were made of thick buffalo skin and were a few inches higher than the inner pair.

Leggings were worn by both sexes. When the women made them out of buffalo skins, they used to remove the hair. They put on them fringes of deer-skin. The strings for fastening the leggings to the belt were made of the skin of the elk, deer or buffalo.

Garters were of two kinds: The *hi-dha-win dhan* were made of a piece of hide cut lengthwise, or else of interwoven pieces of sinew on which beads were strung. They were the width of two fingers, and were wrapped twice around the legs with the ends dangling.

The *hi-dha win dan-pa* or short garters are as wide as three fingers. Men wear them if they are proud. They also form part of a woman's attire on festive occasions.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING.

In ancient times, the women wore the *ha u-na-zhin*, the *ha wa-te*, the *u-tan*, the *hin-be*, and the *wa-in*. The *ha unazhin* or skin shirt was made of the skin of the elk, deer, or antelope, and the *utan* or leggings were of similar material. The *ha wate* was a skin dress or skirt, made of elk or deer skin. The *wain* or robe was of buffalo hide. The moccasins were plain, without any porcupine work.

Since the coming of the pale faces, the Omaha and Ponka women have made a few changes in their attire, which now consists of a blanket or shawl, a chemise, a calico sacque, a skirt, and moccasins. The calico sacque is made with a cape hanging about a foot down the back. On this account no Ponka man would wear a sailor jacket in 1872-3, as its square turned-down collar resembled the woman's cape. Every woman wears a belt, to which is attached a

knife-sheath. The belt is worn straight around the waist by the Omaha women, but the Dakota women lower it in front, converting thereby the lower part of the sack into a stomacher, which serves as a pocket for carrying sundry articles.

Instead of collars, the Omaha and Ponka wore necklaces. Those worn by men were called, *wa-nan-p'in*. Necklaces of bears' claws are still used by a few men, and probably formed one of the ancient styles. There are several other styles, most of which have been introduced by the traders. Among these latter is one kind made of white shells perforated at the ends, such as are commonly found among the Dakota.

The woman's necklace is called *u-in' ga-zan'-de* by the Ponka, and *u'-in ga-zan'-de* by the Omaha. This necklace is made by stringing (*ga-zan-de*) beads on horsehair, which is interwoven, the beads being arranged in different colors so as to form various designs, such as birds, arrows, and horses.

There were no pockets made in garments. But receptacles for articles were formed by fastening the belt around the robe, blanket or sacque, the belt forming the bottom of the "*u-ti-zhi*," and the articles were then put within the garment. The robe or sacque was allowed to be full, or as white ladies term it, a "Garibaldi waist."

The Omaha and Ponka had no wigs. The one worn by the Ponka chief, Standing Bear, prior to 1879, was given to him (*fide* J. La Flèche) by the Yankton chief, Struck by the Ree, who used to wear it at councils and dances.

Plumes and eagle feathers when worn in the hair are marks of distinction for brave men. See the account of the reception of an infant into the deer gens of the Omaha, pp. 245-6, Om. Soc., in 3d Eth. Rept.

Head-bands were used by the women for keeping the hair out of their eyes. No man wore one except when he had a headache.

Earrings and pendants. A modern kind is the *pe u-ga-shke*, made of pewter. Several of them were worn in each ear.

Another kind is made of a species of white shell, having three names, "the real beads," "the real earrings," and "the real necklace," the latter name having been given because necklaces are made out of them. I have seen oblong pieces of clam shell about two inches long so used by the Ponka, who call them *ga-shpe u-in*, "ear ornaments split from the edge (of the shell) by hitting."

Nose-rings.—A few Omaha women wear them. When J. La Flèche was a boy he saw two young men who wore them.

Breast ornaments.—The kind commonly seen is "*ni ki-de*," which is made of shell, and is about four inches in diameter. In the middle are two small holes, through which is passed the thong by which it is hung from the neck.

Knife-sheaths are attached to the belt on the left side, and are worn by men as well as by women. Those of the men are often decorated with bead-work, and are shorter and narrower than those of the women. The only ornamentation on the latter consists of rows of brass nails or tacks, placed on the wide part of the sheath proper, next the knife blade.

A fire-steel holder was composed of two pieces of skin. The pointed end of the longer piece was turned over after the fire-steel was put in, thus forming a cover for the sheath. The short piece was a square, and was sewed on the square part of the longer piece, forming a pocket or sheath.

Pomades for the hair.—In former days, the chief pomade consisted of buffalo fat mixed with fragrant grass. They also said that if one would take the fat of an otter's tail, melt it and mix it with sweet grass, and then rub the mixture on the head, the growth of the hair would be promoted.

Soaps were unknown, but they cleansed the hands by washing them in ashes and water. After eating, the face and hands were usually wiped with a wisp of grass. See p. 316, Om. Soc., in 3d Eth. Rept.

Combs and brushes were unknown; but they had a good substitute for both in the *kha-de mi-ka-he* or grass-comb. This was made of a very stiff grass, gathered in the spring of the year. The grass is soon knocked down, the twigs are collected, and deer-sinew is wrapped around them, forming a bush which is about the size and shape of an ordinary shaving-brush, but much stiffer.

Tweezers or spiral pieces of wire are now used for removing the beard, mustache, and eyebrows of men. Hair used to be removed from the sides of the head by running a hot stone very rapidly along the head. This was done when the hair was worn Osage fashion.

Mirrors.—A clear stream answered for this purpose, hence the name, *ni u-ki-gdha-sin*, "he peeped into the water at himself," now applied to mirrors.

Perfumes.—Five of these are found among the Omaha and Ponka. The first is the *pe-zhi zan-sta* or "strong-smelling grass," which is plaited into necklaces and carried about by men as well as by

women. This grass has a very pleasant odor, resembling that of the vanilla bean. The second kind is the *i-nu-bdhañ-ki-dhe sa-be*, "the black seeds, which emit a pleasant perfume," columbine seeds.(?) These seeds are tied up in pieces of calico, etc., which are worn about the neck. The third is the *pe-zhi pa* or "bitter grass." The fourth consists of the small seeds found in the *ma-zi zhu* or cedar cones. The fifth is known as the *in-tchañ-ga iñ-gdhe e-gan*, "what resembles mouse dung." It is a grass seed smaller than seed wheat, and is found in Iowa, at the head of a stream which the Omaha call *Mi-ka tan* or "Where raccoons abound."

Porcupine-work.—This and fringe (*ga-sne-sne*) were the only kinds of dress ornamentation known in ancient days. The art of putting on porcupine-work was called *u-dhi-ske*, because the quills were put on as closely as possible, making them lie thick together (*u-ske*). The women used to dye some of the quills red, others black, and some yellow, leaving the rest white. These quills were put on moccasins, leggins, robes, shirts, pipe-stems, quivers, knife-sheaths, tobacco-pouches of deer or antelope skin.

Dyes.—Red dye for quills and horse-tails was made thus: Before frost the women gathered together the sumac berries and laid them away to dry. They also gathered the roots of a fine grass, called "*gdhan-de*," which they pounded between two stones, and mixed with the sumac; the latter not being pounded. There were two kinds of black dye. One was made by taking the yellow unburnt clay from which Indian red was made, mixing it with grease, and putting it into a kettle, where it was fried till it became black. Sometimes the former mixture was put into a kettle in which maple bark had been boiled, and this compound was the other black dye. Yellow dye was the product of the *we-zi-dhe dhin*, which are the yellow flowers of a fine grass which is a parasite of the *zha-kdhda zi* (a plant not as tall as the Nebraska sunflower matures in September, not yet identified). Sometimes these yellow flowers were taken when the sap was in the grass and placed in a kettle with the quills to be dyed. The bundle was tied very tightly and laid away for two or three days. The pressure forced out the sap and this moistened and dyed the quills at the end of that period; but when they wished to dye them very quickly the quills and the flowers were boiled together in a kettle of water.

Bead-work was not known among these tribes prior to contact with the white people. It has superseded porcupine-work among most of the tribes along the lower Missouri river.

Skin ornamentation.—Tattooing was practiced in the early days. La Flèche and Two Crows said that no well-behaved man was ever tattooed; but I have seen several aged men, among whom was the chief Two Bears or Yellow Smoke, and Ki-shta-wa-gu, who were thus marked, one on the fingers and the other on the wrists, with transverse lines. Tattooing was chiefly practiced on the daughters of the principal men of the tribe, who could afford to purchase this great privilege. Such women were marked on the foreheads, breasts, backs, and wrists. The mark on a woman's forehead was a round spot, that symbolized the sun, to which the woman was consecrated by the ceremony. Previous to the ceremony some box-elder wood was charred, pounded and moistened. The operator took an instrument consisting of three or four needles tied to the truncated and flattened end of a stick, so arranged that the points formed a straight line. With this he pricked the charcoal into the skin, following the lines of the figures which had been traced thereon. This tattooing was called "*pe batu*," i. e. making the forehead blue by pricking it. At present this ceremony of tattooing the women is performed by the young chief I-shta ba-su-de (son of Yellow Smoke) of the Hañ-ga gens. Only chiefs can witness the act. The Osage have a similar custom, but it forms part of the ceremonies of one degree in their secret order. Instead of one spot on the forehead they make two.

The men often reddened the parting of their wives' hair, as well as their cheeks, after they had combed their hair for them. In one of the myths the girl calls on her brothers and grandfather to comb her hair; and an Iowa legend tells of a similar service performed for several days in succession by a husband for his wife. Men used to paint their faces with Indian red, yellow earth, and burnt earth. Some Omahas rubbed common clay or mud over their faces in oblique stripes. Any pattern was made, just as suited the man's fancy. The face was painted with charcoal in time of war. See p. 317, Om. Soc., in 3d Eth. Rept. Among the Osage, each design had its meaning, referring either to the gens of the man or else to the animal or other mysterious being whose aid he invoked. Black earth was used for painting on the buffalo hides in former days, when the badges of the different gentes were painted on the principal tents. See pp. 230, 234, 240, *et passim*, in Om. Soc., 3d Eth. Rept. When they wished to paint a hide, instead of a brush, they used a piece of pumice stone or a dried buffalo bone. The latter was scraped away till it became very thin.